

**CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

1. A virus protection method for use with a computer system having a nonvolatile memory and a mass storage device with a master boot record containing a partition table, the method comprising the steps of:
  - 5       storing code in the nonvolatile memory that is capable of reading the partition table in the master boot record stored in the mass storage device; and
  - using the stored code to read the master boot record, locate the partition table in the master boot table, locate a bootable partition within the partition table, and begin a boot process using the bootable partition.
2. The virus protection method recited in Claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
  - using the stored code to check the master boot record stored in the mass storage device has been changed since a prior determination.
3. The virus protection method recited in Claim 2 wherein the master boot record stored in a secure area of the mass storage device.
4. The virus protection method recited in Claim 1 further comprising the steps of:
  - using the stored code to calculate a value related to the master boot record stored in the mass storage device to determine if the master boot record has been changed
  - 5       since a prior determination.
5. The virus protection method recited in Claim 4 further comprising the steps of:
  - if a value related to the master boot record is not present, calculating the value related to the master boot record; and
  - storing the calculated value in the nonvolatile memory.
6. The virus protection method recited in Claim 1 wherein the value is a checksum of the master boot record.

7. The virus protection method recited in Claim 6 wherein the value is a cyclic redundancy check of the master boot record.

8. The virus protection method recited in Claim 1 wherein the value is a checksum of the partition table of the master boot record.

9. The virus protection method recited in Claim 1 wherein the value is a cyclic redundancy check of the partition table of the master boot record.

10. The virus protection method recited in Claim 1 wherein a portion of the code stored in the nonvolatile memory is copied from the master boot record.

11. The virus protection method recited in Claim 1 wherein a portion of the code stored in the nonvolatile memory is derived from the master boot record.

12. The virus protection method recited in Claim 1 wherein the code is separate from the master boot record.

13. The virus protection method recited in Claim 4 wherein, when the value stored in the nonvolatile memory does not match the value calculated from the master boot record, using the stored code to update the master boot record.

14. Virus protection apparatus comprising:  
a computer system having a nonvolatile memory and a mass storage device with a master boot record containing a partition table;  
code stored in the nonvolatile memory that is capable of reading the partition table in the master boot record stored in the mass storage device and which is capable of reading the master boot record, locating the partition table in the master boot table, locating a bootable partition within the partition table, and beginning a boot process using the bootable partition.

5 15. The virus protection apparatus recited in Claim 14 wherein the stored code checks the master boot record stored in the mass storage device to determine if it has been changed since a prior determination.

16. The virus protection apparatus recited in Claim 15 wherein the master boot record stored in a secure area of the mass storage device.

17. The virus protection apparatus recited in Claim 14 wherein the stored code calculates a value related to the master boot record stored in the mass storage device to determine if the master boot record has been changed since a prior determination.

18. The virus protection apparatus recited in Claim 14 wherein if a value related to the master boot record is not present, the code calculates the value related to the master boot record and stores it in the nonvolatile memory.

19. The virus protection apparatus recited in Claim 17 wherein the value is selected from a group including a checksum of the master boot record, a checksum of the partition table of the master boot record, a cyclic redundancy check of the master boot record, and a cyclic redundancy check of the partition table of the master boot record.

20. The virus protection apparatus recited in Claim 14 wherein a portion of the code stored in the nonvolatile memory is copied from the master boot record.

21. The virus protection apparatus recited in Claim 14 wherein a portion of the code stored in the nonvolatile memory is derived from the master boot record.

22. The virus protection apparatus recited in Claim 14 wherein the code is separate from the master boot record.

23. The virus protection apparatus recited in Claim 17 wherein, when the value stored in the nonvolatile memory does not match the value calculated from the master boot record, the stored code is used to update the master boot record.